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## MY CAMPAIGN IN EAST KENTUCKY.

### I.

The following account of General Garfield's brilliant operations in Kentucky, by which that State was held to her moorings in the Union, was written as data for a life of him, which I wrote in 1880. It is printed exactly as it was originally written, excepting in the opening paragraph, which the General began in the first person singular and then changed to the third person. It is now first published.

EDMUND KIRKE.

### II.

J. A. GARFIELD was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of U. S. Volunteers August 14th, 1861, and was mustered into the service on the 21st of the same month. His regiment was not at that time raised, as it was then the practice to appoint field officers to recruit regiments. He preferred to be a Lieutenant-Colonel, if he could have a graduate of the Military Academy as Colonel.

He immediately reported for duty to Brig.-Gen. Charles E. Hill, commander of Camp Chase, near Columbus, O., and entered upon camp duty—attended the drills and studied the tactics. By the aid of blocks to represent companies, officers and non-commissioned officers, he thoroughly mastered the Infantry Tactics in his quarters, and attended and participated in the drills in camp. It is remarkable with what facility the American mind adapts itself to situations, and this has never been so strikingly illustrated as in the great movements of 1861, which

transformed in so short a time so great a multitude of young men from the unlimited independence of American citizens to the willing but severe restraints of military discipline. Colonel Garfield, writing to a friend at that time, said : "I have had a curious interest in watching the process in my own mind, by which the fabric of my life is being demolished and reconstructed, to meet the new condition of affairs. One by one my old plans and aims, modes of thought and feeling, are found to be inconsistent with present duty, and are set aside to give place to the new structure of military life. It is not without a regret almost tearful at times that I look upon the ruins. But if, as the result of the broken plans and shattered individual lives of thousands of American citizens, we can see, on the ruins of our old national errors, a new and enduring fabric arise, based on larger freedom and higher justice, it will be a small sacrifice indeed. For myself, I am contented with such a prospect, and, regarding my life as given to the country, am only anxious to make as much of it as possible before the mortgage upon it is foreclosed."

Governor Dennison, concluding that it was best that Garfield should be at the head of a regiment, promoted him to a colonelcy on the 5th of September, and appointed Judge Sheldon, of Elyria, O., and Don A. Pardee, of Medina, O., lieutenant-colonel and major, and directed them to raise the Forty-second Regiment of Ohio Volunteers. About the middle of September these three officers went into the vicinity of their several homes and began the work of recruiting for their regiment. Colonel Garfield addressed the students of his academy and the citizens of his neighborhood, and raised the first company for the regiment in two or three days. This company was composed mainly of his students, many of them far advanced in the college course. It reached Camp Chase, and was mustered into the service on the 20th of September. In the following seven days six additional companies were added, and drilling began. The final complete muster of the full regiment was not made till the 27th of November, 1862. Before the end of September, however, Colonel Garfield organized a school for the officers of his regiment, and required thorough recitations in the tactics, illustrating the manœuvres by the blocks which he had prepared for his own use. Regimental, company and squad drill, skirmish drill and bayonet exercises, were constantly kept up from six to eight hours per day. It was generally

admitted that no better drilled and disciplined regiment ever went out of the State.

On the 16th of December, 1861, Colonel Garfield received orders to move at once with his regiment, via Cincinnati, to Catlettsburg, Ky., at the mouth of the Big Sandy River. On the following morning (Sunday, the 17th) the regiment left camp. Before taking the cars, at Columbus, a solemn and impressive prayer was offered by the chaplain, Rev. I. H. Jones, and a beautiful banner was presented to the regiment by Governor Dennison, on behalf of the students of the Eclectic Institute, of which Colonel Garfield was President. On arriving at Cincinnati, Colonel Garfield received a dispatch from General Buell, ordering him to send his regiment to Catlettsburg, but to report immediately in person to Department Headquarters at Louisville. On arriving there, General Buell informed him that he was to be sent against the rebel general Humphrey Marshall, who was then invading Eastern Kentucky from the Virginia border, and had already descended the Big Sandy as far as Prestongburg. He directed the Colonel to study the problem carefully, and call next Sunday morning to consult on a general plan of operations. It was a trying and unexpected responsibility to be placed on the shoulders of one who had never heard a hostile gun. Colonel Garfield went to his hotel, and spent nearly the whole night in studying the geography of the country through which he was to operate, in making notes of such suggestions and queries as occurred to his mind and sketching the outlines of the plan which seemed to him feasible for conducting a successful campaign. He has frequently spoken of his interview with the Commanding General on the following morning as one of peculiar interest. Few officers in the service possess more reticence, terse logic, and severe habits of military discipline than General Buell, and the interview between him and the military tyro was a peculiarly interesting one. The one, submitting his plans and queries, and curiously and anxiously watching the face of the commander, but finding no look or expression to indicate his opinion, either of the good sense of the queries or the feasibility of the plan. The queries were answered in a quick, sententious manner, but no word was spoken by the General to indicate approval or disapproval of the plan. The conference was closed with the single remark : "Your orders will be sent to your hotel at six o'clock this evening."

Promptly at that hour the order was received, organizing the Eighteenth Brigade of the Army of the Ohio, Colonel Garfield commanding, and a letter of instruction in General Buell's own handwriting, giving general instructions for the campaign. They were, with but slight modifications, the same as the plan submitted by Colonel Garfield. He prepared at once to take the next train for Cincinnati, but, before leaving, was sent for by General Buell, who gave him maps of the country, funds for necessary purchase of supplies, and detailed a quartermaster and a commissary to serve on the brigade staff. The officers thus assigned, Capt. Ralph Plumb, A. Q. M., and Capt. Jacob Heater, A. C. S., proved to be old friends of Colonel Garfield from northern Ohio. They remained with him for nearly two years, and shared his fortunes and dangers.

He took leave of General Buell on the morning of the 20th of December, receiving his final advice, concluding with the remark : "Colonel, you will be at so great a distance from me, and communication will be so slow and uncertain, that I shall commit all matters of detail, and much of the fate of the campaign, to your discretion. I shall hope to hear a good account of you."

Proceeding at once to Paris, Ky., he remained there till evening, when the Fortieth Ohio Volunteers, under Colonel Cranor, arrived from Cincinnati, in obedience to a telegraphic order from Department Headquarters.

At Paris, Colonel Garfield issued his first general order, assuming command of the Eighteenth Brigade and announcing his staff. While awaiting the arrival of the Fortieth Ohio, he called on several of the leading Union men of Paris, to learn the character of the country and the inhabitants between there and Prestonburg. Hearing of a bold mountaineer at Mount Sterling, fifteen miles distant, who had lately arrived from the neighborhood of Marshall's camp, he sent for him, and on his arrival, about midnight, gathered all the information of the country, the plans and purposes of the rebels, and engaged him to serve Colonel Cranor as guide and scout. During the same night, the Fortieth Ohio Volunteers arrived at Paris. They were directed to await the arrival of their field train, and then march at once toward Prestonburg, *via* Mount Sterling and McCormick's Gap. In their route, they were to be joined by three squadrons of Walford's First Kentucky Cavalry (commonly known as the Wild Cat Cavalry), from Stamford, Ky.

Colonel Garfield immediately started for the Big Sandy, via Cincinnati, and reached Catlettsburg on the 22d of December, and proceeded at once to join his command at Louisa, twenty-eight miles up the Big Sandy.

On the arrival of the Forty-second at Catlettsburg, two days previous, there was a state of great alarm in the community. The only force of Union troops in the Sandy Valley had been stationed at Louisa, but had hastily retreated to the mouth of the river during the night of the 19th, under the impression that Marshall was following with his whole force. The citizens were preparing to cross the Ohio for safety. The only forces at Colonel Garfield's command in the Valley were the Forty-second Ohio Infantry, the First Independent Squadron of Ohio Cavalry and the Fourteenth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, containing at that time not more than 500 men imperfectly armed and equipped. Colonel Garfield had sent forward an order for all this force to commence its march up the valley without waiting for his arrival. On the morning of the 24th, he started up the river from Louisa with such of his command as were in readiness. The river roads were impassable for trains, and the close proximity of the enemy made it unsafe to make so wide a detour from the river as would be required to send trains round by the table-lands to the westward. Many of the wagons were taken apart and conveyed up the river on push-boats, and others men hauled with great difficulty, though empty, along the river road. It was found necessary to rely wholly upon the river for supplies, and only use the army train when the troops should move away from the river. The Big Sandy is a narrow, fickle stream, and finds its way to the Ohio through the roughest and [Manuscript torn].

In time of high water, small steamers can reach Piketon, but heavy freshets render navigation impracticable, in consequence of the swift current filled with floating timber, and the overhanging trees, which almost touch each other from the opposite banks. The supply of a brigade in midwinter, at any considerable distance from the mouth of the river, was a matter of great difficulty. Colonel Garfield engaged two or three small steamers, and hired or impressed all the push-boats on the river, and ordered others built, to insure a supply of forage and provisions for his expedition.

On the first day of January, 1863, he had accumulated ten days' supplies at the mouth of George's Creek, forty miles up the Big

Sandy, and on the following day commenced his march toward Paintville, near which place Marshall held a strongly fortified position with 5,000 men, including two batteries of field artillery and 500 cavalry.

The advance was difficult and slow, the train not being able to make more than five or six miles a day, and sometimes a considerably less distance.

On the 6th of January, Colonel Garfield arrived within seven miles of Paintville. There were three roads leading to the enemy's position : one on the left, bearing down to the river, and along its western bank ; the second, a circuitous one to the right, coming in on Paint Creek to the westward of the village ; the third, a central and more direct route, but leading over a succession of almost impassable hills.

Marshall's main force occupied the fortified camp three miles south of Paintville, which place was held as an outpost by a regiment of infantry, and the three roads between himself and Garfield's advance were held by strong pickets.

In order to deceive Marshall as to his real designs, Colonel Garfield ordered a small force of infantry and cavalry to advance along the river road, drive in the pickets, and move rapidly after them as if with the design of attacking Paintville.

Two hours after this force started, another similar one with similar orders was started to the right, on the road leading to Paintville, via the mouth of Jenny's Creek, and two hours later a third took the middle route. The effect was that the pickets on the first route, being vigorously attacked and driven, retreated in confusion to Paintville, and sent word to the Confederate headquarters that the Union force of cavalry and infantry was advancing on Paintville by the river road. Marshall at once sent a thousand infantry and a battery to meet this supposed column and resist its advance. When this detachment had been gone an hour and a half, the Confederate General heard from the routed pickets on the right that the Federal troops were advancing there. Countermanding his first order, he directed the 1,000 infantry and the battery to check the new danger, and also hurried his troops at Paintville up to the mouth of Jenny's Creek, to make a stand there. Two hours later the pickets on the middle route were driven in, and, finding Paintville abandoned, fled precipitately to the fortified camp with the story that the Union

forces were at their heels, and probably were then occupying Paintville.

Conceiving that he had thus lost Paintville, Marshall hastily withdrew his infantry to the fortified camp, and hearing of the near approach from the west of Colonel Cranor's column, which had been started from Paris, Ky., he retreated precipitately on the evening of January 8th toward Prestonburg, having abandoned or burned a large portion of his supplies.

On the same day, Colonel Garfield entered Paintville, and sent his cavalry, now increased by the temporary addition of 450 of the First Virginia Cavalry which General Cox had sent to him, to attack the Confederate cavalry at the mouth of Jenny's Creek, while he proceeded to build a bridge near the village across Paint Creek, then very much swollen by the rains ; and, taking 1,000 men, made a reconnaissance of the rebel intrenched camp, of which he took possession at 9 P. M. of January 8th. The camp-fires were still burning and the blazing stores not yet consumed. Colonel Garfield immediately sent out a reconnoitering party to ascertain the direction of the retreat, and moved with the remainder of his force down the Jenny's Creek road, to intercept the rebel cavalry in case they had not yet retreated. He found that his cavalry had already attacked and routed them, driving them five miles, and killing and wounding twenty-five. In consequence of having to build two bridges across Jenny's Creek, the command did not reach Paintville till daylight of the 9th. Here they were joined by Colonel Cranor's column from Paris, consisting of the Fortieth Ohio Volunteers and 300 Kentucky cavalry. They had marched nearly 100 miles, were without rations, and completely exhausted. The brigade had also been increased on the 22d by infantry, 400 strong, from Maysville. After distributing the supplies on hand, it was found that there were not three full days' rations for the command.

Colonel Garfield, however, determined to follow up his advantage, and selecting from his infantry force 1,100 men, all that were not too much exhausted to march, he set out at noon of the 9th toward Prestonburg, at the same time sending all the available cavalry force to follow the line of the enemy's retreat up the Jenny's Creek road, and harass and delay his march.

The infantry force reached the mouth of Abbott's Creek, three miles below Prestonburg, at 9 P. M., and Colonel Garfield, finding that Marshall was encamped for the night on the same stream,

three miles higher up, threw his command into bivouac in the midst of a sleety rain, and sent back an order to Lieutenant-Colonel Sheldon at Paintville to bring up every available man with all possible dispatch, for he should force Marshall to battle next morning. Most of the night was spent by the Colonel in learning the character of the surrounding country. He determined, in order to compel his enemy to fight, to cross Abbott's Creek, and, if possible, occupy the road on which he was retreating where it crossed Middle Creek, the stream that entered the Big Sandy next above Abbott's, near Prestonburg. For this purpose, he broke up his bivouac at 4 o'clock A. M. of the 10th, and commenced the movement. On reaching the valley of Middle Creek, he encountered the enemy's cavalry pickets, and captured a quantity of quartermaster stores which the rebels were endeavoring to take away from Prestonburg. Skirmishing continued till about noon, when the enemy's pickets had been driven back to the main body, which was strongly posted on a semi-circular hill at the forks of Middle Creek, three miles from its mouth.

The battle began at 1 o'clock P. M., and continued till dark. (See Official Report.) On the following day, Colonel Garfield showed his officers an intercepted letter, which had been forwarded to him by General Buell, written by Marshall to his wife two weeks before, giving a full statement of the strength and composition of his force. He acknowledged that he had 5,000 men. Colonel Garfield did not consider it prudent to let the facts of the letter be known till the battle was over.

The pursuit was continued on the 11th by the cavalry, and a few more prisoners taken. Prestonburg was also occupied, and a considerable quantity of stores captured. This battle was the first of that series of successes which followed the disasters of 1861. Ten days later, General Thomas won the battle of Mill Spring, and the tide of success swept steadily southward and westward up the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers.

The balance of January was spent in getting supplies up the river, and clearing the valley and surrounding country of guerrillas. For several weeks the low water rendered it impossible to transport the necessary provisions, and when a heavy freshet came, about the beginning of February, a steamboat load of stores was brought up the river by General Garfield when all the masters of steamers refused to venture it. Having secured a sufficient supply

of provisions, General Garfield advanced about the middle of February to Piketon, 120 miles from the mouth of the river, driving out the small force of rebels there. Marshall immediately retreated with his main force across the mountains, to the vicinity of Abingdon, Va., but left a garrison of 500 infantry to hold Pound Gap, the only pass across the mountains north of Cumberland Gap. After having cleared the upper valley of guerrillas in a series of successful scouting expeditions, General Garfield determined to dislodge the rebels from their stronghold at Pound Gap, and thus effect their complete expulsion from Eastern Kentucky.

On the 14th of March, he left Piketon with 600 infantry and 150 cavalry. In the night of the 15th, he had reached the foot of the mountain, forty miles distant from Piketon, and about three miles from the Gap. The rebel camp at the crest of the mountain, where the old stage road crosses from Kentucky to Virginia, was strongly fortified, and the road was obstructed by heavy trees thrown across it. At daybreak of the 16th, General Garfield had arranged his plan of attack, which was to send his cavalry around by the regular road, and at a given hour attack the enemy's pickets, drive them in, and make a demonstration upon their works to attract their attention. In the mean time, he would lead his infantry in person up the mountain, where the ascent was precipitous and without a path, and reaching the crest about two miles from the Gap, move along the ridge, and attack the enemy in flank and rear. The weather favored his plan. The ascent was made in the midst of a furious snow-storm, which not only concealed the movement from observation, but muffled every footstep. After three hours' struggle with snow and mountain, the summit was reached without discovery, and the column moved along the crest in silence. As it drew near the rebel camp at the Gap, the brisk fire of the cavalry skirmishing was heard, and it was found that the enemy had given his entire attention to the force in front, and had gone outside their works to drive the Union cavalry down the mountain. General Garfield put his infantry upon the double-quick, and was within rifle-shot of the camp before the movement was discovered. The rebels rallied, formed line of battle, but before they had gained a position to make successful resistance, they received a volley and were charged upon with the bayonet. In a fight of less than twenty minutes' duration, they were utterly routed, and their camp, con-

sisting of sixty log-houses, capable of accommodating 1,200 men, and all their stores, were in the hands of the attacking party.

After spending the night in these comfortable quarters, General Garfield burned the camp and all the stores which he could not carry away, and returned to Piketon without the loss of a man, having marched over 90 miles in the worst of winter weather. The whole expedition consumed less than five days. This completed the expulsion of the last organized rebel force from Eastern Kentucky.

Previous to this expedition, General Garfield had corresponded with General Rosecrans, then commanding the Department of Western Virginia, and they had united in proposing a plan to the War Department to destroy the Virginia and East Tennessee Railroad, then the only direct line of communication between Richmond and the Gulf States. General Rosecrans was to send a force up New River in Western Virginia, to cut the railroad near Newburn, while General Garfield was to pass through Pound Gap and cut it at Abingdon, Va., and destroy the salt-works at that place. The two great rebel armies of the East and the West were at that time fully occupied, and the destruction could have been made very complete. But toward the end of March orders were received creating the Mountain Department for General Fremont. General Rosecrans was relieved, and General Garfield was ordered to leave a small force to hold the Sandy Valley, and join General Buell with the rest of his command. He reached Louisville with a part of his brigade, and found an order directing him to proceed to Nashville, Tenn., and report to General Buell in person. On his arrival there, he found that General Buell was hurrying to the relief of General Grant at Pittsburgh Landing. He overtook General Buell on the 5th of April, was at once assigned to the command of the Twentieth Brigade, Sixth Division, of the Army of the Ohio, and reached the battle-field of Shiloh on the afternoon of the second day, in time to participate in the victory.

He continued with Buell's army in its operations around Corinth and on its subsequent march across Northern Alabama.

In August, 1862, his health failed, and he was sent north on sick leave. About the time of his leaving for home, he was assigned, by order of the War Department, to the command of the forces at Cumberland Gap, but was too ill to accept. When he was partially convalescent, he was ordered to Washington to serve as a member of

the court-martial for the trial of Maj.-Gen. Fitz-John Porter. In January, 1863, on the dissolution of the court, General Garfield was ordered to report to Maj.-Gen. Rosecrans at Murfreesboro', Tenn. He was at once appointed Chief of Staff of the Army of the Cumberland, in which capacity he served through all the campaigns of that army till October, 1863. He was appointed a Major-General of Volunteers "for distinguished and gallant services in the battle of Chickamauga," and ranked as such from the 19th day of September, 1863. On the 5th day of December, 1863, he resigned his commission, and on the 7th took his seat as Representative of the Nineteenth Congressional District of Ohio, in the Thirty-eighth Congress.

JAMES A. GARFIELD.